

JIMMY CARTER LEAVES THE SOUTHERN BAPTIST CONVENTION -- AGAIN

Updated February 15, 2004 (first published October 24, 2000) (David Cloud, Fundamental Baptist Information Service, P.O. Box 610368, Port Huron, MI 48061, 866-295-4143, fbns@wayoflife.org; for instructions about subscribing and unsubscribing or changing addresses, see the information paragraph at the end of the article) -

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter recently mailed a letter to 75,000 pastors stating, "I can no longer be associated with the Southern Baptist Convention." He said he felt "excluded by the adoption of policies and an increasingly rigid SBC creed."

Carter is a heretic who believes Mormons are Christians and loves modernistic theologians such as Barth and Brunner who deny the infallible inspiration of Holy Scripture and many other cardinal doctrines. After his election to the highest political office in America, Carter appointed a pro-abortion activist, Sarah Weddington, to the position of assistant to the president. Weddington was lead attorney in the 1973 abortion case, Roe v. Wade, which resulted in legalization of abortion in America and the murder of millions of unborn babies. In 1992, Carter agreed to serve as the honorary co-chair of the Human Rights Campaign, a homosexual advocacy group. In January 2004, after Georgia public school superintendent Kathy Cox ordered the word "evolution" to be removed from its science textbooks, Carter entered the fray and won the day for evolution ("Another Attempt to Deny Evolution," San Diego Union-Tribune, Feb. 12).

One wonders how many times Jimmy Carter is going to announce his departure from the Southern Baptist Convention. He made almost exactly the same proclamation back in 1993, saying: "In the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, my wife and I have found a home [and will] cast our lot with this fellowship for the rest of our lives." The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) is a group formed by Southern Baptist liberals who believe Christians are at liberty to deny the Bible's infallible inspiration and to question other key doctrines of the faith. Though the CBF itself is a separate organization from the Southern Baptist Convention, many of the churches that support the CBF also participate with various programs within the Southern Baptist Convention. There are many churches within the various state conventions which are aligned with the SBC that support the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in addition to or instead of supporting the national SBC. In practice, the CBF was created not as an alternative Baptist denomination but as a means whereby liberal Southern Baptist pastors could remain within the SBC (and thus maintain their retirement and other financial benefits) while channeling funds to liberal causes not supported by the current conservative leadership.

In a practical sense, Jimmy Carter has not left the Southern Baptist Convention. He remains a deacon and Sunday School teacher in the Maranatha Baptist Church of Plains, Georgia, a church aligned with the SBC. His Sunday School class is attended by busloads of visitors, a large percentage of which are Southern Baptists.

All of this is mere religious politics on his part in an attempt to sway events within the convention. He doesn't really want to leave the convention; he wants to influence it after his own liberal image. The Dallas Morning News (Oct. 20) reported that a key Texas Baptist leader, David Currie, counseled Carter to send out the letter. Currie told the newspaper that Carter initiated a meeting with him in September. Currie stated that Carter shared his feelings about the conservatives in the Convention and said, "What can I do to help?" Currie replied: "Well, Mr. President, Baptists across the nation need to know how you feel. All Baptists know who you are, and they need to know how you feel." Carter replied, "I kind of have a letter in my head [that] I'd like to share with Baptists."

Carter is from the state of Georgia, and the Baptist Convention in that state is extremely liberal. R. Kirby Godsey, president of Mercer University (which has received millions of dollars from the Georgia Baptist Convention) published a book entitled *When We Talk about God ... Let's Be Honest* in 1996 that denies, reinterprets, or questions practically every doctrine of the Christian faith. Godsey says that "the notion that God is the all powerful, the high and mighty principal of heaven and earth should be laid aside." That is wicked heresy of the highest degree. For almost two decades, students at Mercer have been influenced by this man and by professors who hold similar views (but who are not as bold as Godsey about putting their doctrine into print); these students have graduated into positions within the SBC and have, in turn, influenced great numbers of church members.

There have been many attempts to have Godsey step down, but the fact remains that this man has remained at the head of one of the SBC's influential schools from 1979 until his scheduled retirement in 2004. This is a testimony to the fact that large numbers of people in the SBC are at least sympathetic with heresy and unbelief. Many others do not like what Godsey is teaching, but they are not willing to make the only statement against heresy which means anything, which is to publicly denounce it in no uncertain terms and to separate from it in the strictest sense.

The problem within the Southern Baptist Convention is its refusal to deal with heresy after a biblical fashion. Heretics are to be rejected and dismissed from the churches (Titus 3) and separated from (Rom. 16:17, etc.). If the Southern Baptist

Convention would obey the Bible in these matters, it would be much smaller than it is now, but it would not have to play politics with the Christian faith. The doctrine of biblical separation is not practiced by Southern Baptist preachers, even the most conservative ones.

See "When Was the Southern Baptist Convention Rescued from Liberalism?" in the Fundamental Baptist CD-ROM Library. Way of Life also publishes a book by that title.

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